

**Late Quaternary Marine and Terrestrial Environments,  
Northwestern Baffin Island, Northwest Territories**  
**Environnements marin et terrestre du Quaternaire supérieur,  
dans le nord-ouest de l'île de Baffin, Territoires du Nord-Ouest**  
**Meeres- und Landumwelt im späten Quaternär im Nordwesten  
der Insel Baffin, Nordwest-Territorien**

Susan K. Short, John T. Andrews, Kerstin M. Williams, Nancy J. Weiner and  
Scott A. Elias

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Article abstract

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# LATE QUATERNARY MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL ENVIRONMENTS, NORTHWESTERN BAFFIN ISLAND, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Susan K. SHORT, John T. ANDREWS, Kerstin M. WILLIAMS, Nancy J. WEINER and Scott A. ELIAS: first author, Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research and Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309, U.S.A.; second author, Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research and Department of Geological Sciences, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309, U.S.A.; third, fourth and fifth authors, Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309, U.S.A.

**ABSTRACT** Paleoenvironmental data were analyzed from terrestrial, lake, and marine sediments collected near Arctic Bay, Baffin Island, N.W.T. Eighteen new radiocarbon dates provide chronological control, superseding earlier results. Spuriously old dates were obtained from both sandy peats and low-organic lake sediments. The most reliable dates were from marine shells and foraminifera. They indicate that deglaciation was underway by 9000 BP rather than 16,000 BP. Over the period of the record, the local environment was characterized by a high arctic pollen assemblage dominated by grass, sedge, and willow; a middle Holocene warm period is indicated by increased willow, herb, and moss values. Sea-ice conditions were severe enough to inhibit the growth of diatoms until ca. 6300 BP and ice proximal and deglacial conditions prevailed in the fiords until ca. 6000 BP. Diatom productivity increased between 3000 BP and 2500 BP, suggesting warmer surface waters and less sea ice. After 2000 BP diatom accumulation decreased sharply, due to a cooling of climate. The foraminifera indicate a major change in bottom water conditions ca. 4000 BP as the benthic species shift from a calcareous to an arenaceous assemblage.

**RÉSUMÉ** *Environnements marin et terrestre du Quaternaire supérieur, dans le nord-ouest de l'île de Baffin, Territoires du Nord-Ouest.* On a procédé à l'analyse des données paléoenvironnementales tirées de sédiments terrestres, marins et lacustres, près de Arctic Bay. Dix-huit nouvelles dates au radiocarbone ont permis d'établir une nouvelle chronologie. Les dates les plus anciennes, et les moins fiables, ont été obtenus dans des tourbes sableuses et des sédiments lacustres à basse teneur organique. Les dates les plus sûres proviennent de coquillages marins et des foraminifères. Elles indiquent que la déglaciation était en cours dès 9000 BP plutôt qu'à 16 000 BP. Pendant la période relevée, l'environnement dans le haut Arctique était caractérisé au niveau local par un assemblage pollinique dominé par l'herbe, le carex et le saule; à l'Holocène moyen, les valeurs croissantes du saule, de l'herbe et de la mousse reflètent une période chaude. La densité de la glace marine était assez forte pour empêcher la croissance des diatomées jusqu'à 6300 BP; la déglaciation s'est poursuivie jusque vers 6000 BP dans les fjords. La reproduction des diatomées a augmenté entre 3000 et 2500 BP en raison de températures de surface plus chaudes et une diminution des glaces marines. Après 2000 BP, l'accumulation des diatomées a décru abruptement en raison d'un refroidissement climatique. Les foraminifères démontrent un changement important survenu dans l'état des eaux profondes vers 4000 BP puisqu'il y a eu remplacement des espèces benthoniques à test calcaire par des espèces à test agglutiné.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG** *Meeres- und Landumwelt im späten Quaternär im Nordwesten der Insel Baffin, Nordwest-Territorien.* Man hat Paläoumweltdaten von Erd-, See- und Meeres-Sedimenten analysiert, die man in der Nähe der Arctic Bay, Insel Baffin, Nordwest-Territorien gesammelt hat. Achtzehn neue Radiocarbonaten liefern eine chronologische Kontrolle und ersetzen so frühere Resultate. Falsche alte Daten hat man sowohl aus sandigem Torf wie auch aus Seesedimenten mit niedrigem organischem Gehalt gewonnen. Die zuverlässigsten Daten stammen von Meeresmuscheln und Foraminiferen. Sie zeigen, dass die Enteisung um 9000 v.u.Z. und nicht um 16,000 v.u.Z. im Gange war. Über den Zeitraum des Belegs charakterisierte sich die lokale Umwelt durch eine Pollen-Zusammensetzung der hohen Arktis, die von Gras, Schilfgras und Weide beherrscht war; auf eine warme Periode während des mittleren Holozäns weisen zunehmende Weiden-, Gras- und Mooswerte. Die Meereseisbedingungen waren streng genug, um das Wachstum von Diatomeen bis etwa 6300 v.u.Z. zu verhindern und Proximaleis und Enteisungsbedingungen herrschten in den Fjords bis etwa 6000 v.u.Z. vor. Die Reproduktion von Diatomeen nahm zwischen 3000 v.u.Z. und 2500 v.u.Z. zu, was auf wärmeres Oberflächenwasser und weniger Meereseis schliessen lässt. Nach 2000 v.u.Z. nahm die Diatomeen-Akkumulation wegen einer Klimaabkühlung plötzlich ab. Die Foraminiferen zeigen einen beträchtlichen Wechsel der Bedingungen im tiefen Wasser um etwa 4000 v.u.Z., wenn die benthonischen Spezies von einer kalkartigen zu einer sandigen Zusammensetzung übergehen.

## INTRODUCTION

The area near the settlement of Arctic Bay, Baffin Island, N.W.T. (Fig. 1) is of interest because an organic-rich section located there provided  $^{14}\text{C}$ -dated evidence for terrestrial materials older than 11,000 BP and younger than 40,000 BP in the eastern Canadian Arctic (Short and Andrews, 1988). Because of the implications of these dates, we set up a sampling program to expand the data base by including lake and marine sediments, providing a link between terrestrial and marine paleoenvironments (Mudie, 1980, 1982; Mudie and Short, 1985; Short *et al.*, 1989) and to augment the chronological framework. In this paper, we present paleoenvironmental data from fiord and lake sediments and terrestrial organic-rich deposits located near the settlement of Arctic Bay, Baffin Island, N.W.T. (Fig. 1). The results of the expanded dating program suggest that great caution will have to be used in selection of material from this region for dating.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Arctic Bay (Ikpiarjuk) is located between Arctic and Victor bays on Borden Peninsula, northwestern Baffin Island (Fig. 1). The low saddle in which the community lies is bordered on the west by the Uluksan Peninsula (456 m) and on the east by King George V Mountain (700 m).

The area is underlain by Precambrian and Paleozoic rocks. The dominant rock type is quartz arenite, although there are small outcrops of shale, limestone, and dolostone (Thorsteinsson and Tozer, 1970). Except in small wetlands and seepage slopes, regional vegetation cover is sparse. The local glacial history is not known in detail but mapping is progressing (A.S. Dyke, personal communication, 1992). At present small ice caps are located 70 km to the east and northeast of the settlement.

The region has a mean July temperature of  $4.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , a mean annual temperature of  $-14^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and a mean annual precipitation of 15 cm (Maxwell, 1981); it lies in the southern part of the High Arctic terrestrial phytogeographic region (Polunin, 1960). The modern pollen spectra are dominated by local taxa, primarily *Salix* (willow), Gramineae (grass family), Filicales (ferns and fern allies), and Cyperaceae (sedge family) (Short and Andrews, 1988). Exotic pollen input is low ( $<200$  grains/gram dry weight [g/gdw]). *Betula* (birch) is the most common exotic pollen type (0-9%) in the modern spectrum.

Strathcona Sound is normally covered by sea ice ten to eleven months of the year. Freeze-up usually occurs in early September, and the sound is not totally ice free until the first week of August. During exceptional years freeze-up may be delayed until the first week of October or the ice may not clear at all (Markham, 1981). The area is affected by the southward flow of Arctic Surface Water. Bottom water temperatures are probably about  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

## COLLECTIONS AND METHODS

Three new organic-rich sections — Saddle Sections I and II and George V Section (Fig. 1) — were collected in 1987 for

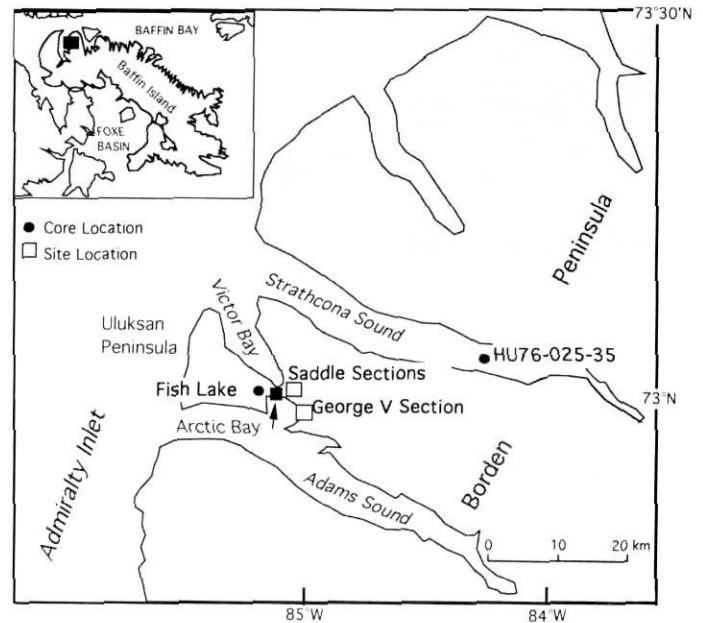


FIGURE 1. Site location map, Arctic Bay, Baffin Island.

Carte de localisation d'Arctic Bay, dans l'île de Baffin.

dating and fossil insect analyses. The section sampled in 1982 is discussed in detail in Short and Andrews (1988).

Three short (0.5 m) cores were collected using a raft and a piston corer at Fish Lake ( $73^{\circ}02'05''\text{N}$ ,  $85^{\circ}13'\text{W}$ , 91 m), Uluksan Peninsula (Fig. 1). This lake is small and shallow (ca. 8 m water depth at coring sites). Core 2 was analyzed for pollen (2-cm intervals), diatoms (10-cm intervals), sedimentology, and mass magnetic susceptibility (MS).

A 9.21 m-long piston core from a water depth of 230 m in Strathcona Sound (HU76-025-35) was analyzed for pollen, diatoms, sedimentology, and MS. Samples were processed at 35- and 50-cm intervals (to 9.03 m).

We used standard sedimentology techniques and diatom, foraminifera, fossil insect and pollen methods which have been described elsewhere (Jørgensen, 1967; Coope, 1968; Faegri and Iversen, 1975; Nichols, 1975; Cwynar *et al.*, 1979; Mudie, 1980; Williams, 1986; Andrews and Jennings, 1987; Jennings, 1989).

The pollen sum *excludes* pre-Quaternary palynomorphs and dinoflagellates, both of which are rare; thus, the former are not believed to affect the spurious radiocarbon dates. The pollen diagrams were constructed using a reduced data set (Figs. 2b, 3b).

Pollen concentrations are low in both the lacustrine and marine sediments. Total counts ranged from 40 to 100 pollen and spores, and two slides were frequently counted at each level in the marine core. These counts are comparable to those recorded in marine cores from central and northern Baffin Island fiords (Short *et al.*, 1989). The low pollen sums are of concern but can provide reliable environmental data if interpreted with care.

RESULTS

RADIOCARBON DATES

We have obtained 19 new <sup>14</sup>C dates from the Arctic Bay area in addition to the dates reported by Short and Andrews (1988) (Table I). Details on each new date are included in the data compilation of Kaufman and Williams (1992).

About half of these dates appear unacceptable, because of three major problems: (1) contamination of the acid-insoluble organic matter (AIOM) fraction in lake sediments with low organic carbon (e.g., Clark *et al.*, 1989); (2) errors in the dates on the terrestrial peats; and (3) differences in the apparent ages of terrestrial and marine materials because of ocean residence time of CO<sub>2</sub> (Stuiver *et al.*, 1986).

The <sup>14</sup>C dates from Fish Lake 2 are on the AIOM fraction. The four dates have one age reversal, and the date from 6-7 cm (375 ± 65 BP; AA-3997) appears "young" relative to that from 22-27 cm (6155 ± 155 BP; AA-3288). The total organic carbon (TOC) weight percentages vary between 0.1

FIGURE 2a. Selected sedimentological parameters, Fish Lake 2. MS = mass magnetic susceptibility; TOC% = percent total organic carbon.

*Paramètres sédimentologiques choisis, à Fish Lake 2. MS = susceptibilité magnétique; TOC% = pourcentage de carbone organique total.*

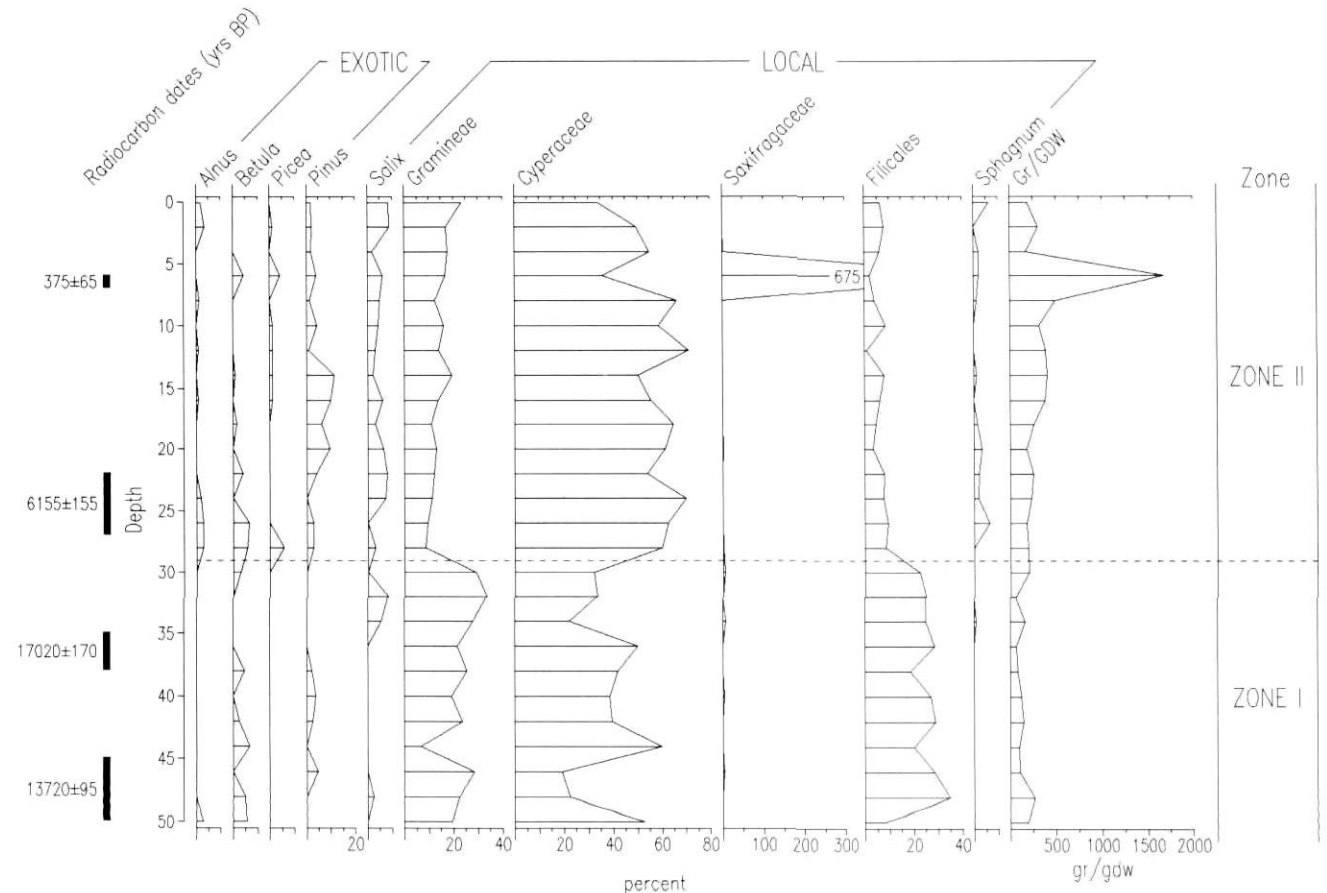
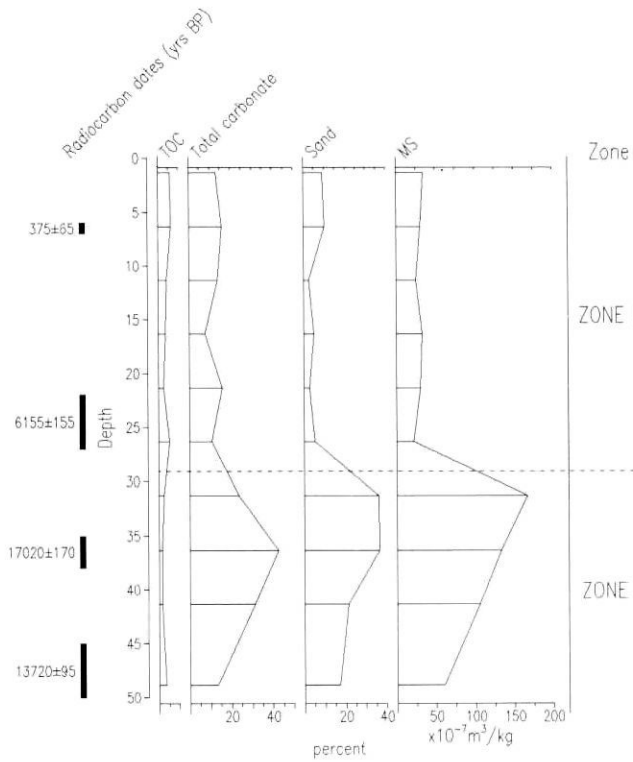


FIGURE 2b. Percentage pollen diagram (reduced data set) and pollen concentration summary (g/gdw), Fish Lake 2. *Diagramme pollinique en pourcentage (ensemble réduit de données) et concentration pollinique totale (grains/g de séd. sec), Fish Lake 2.*

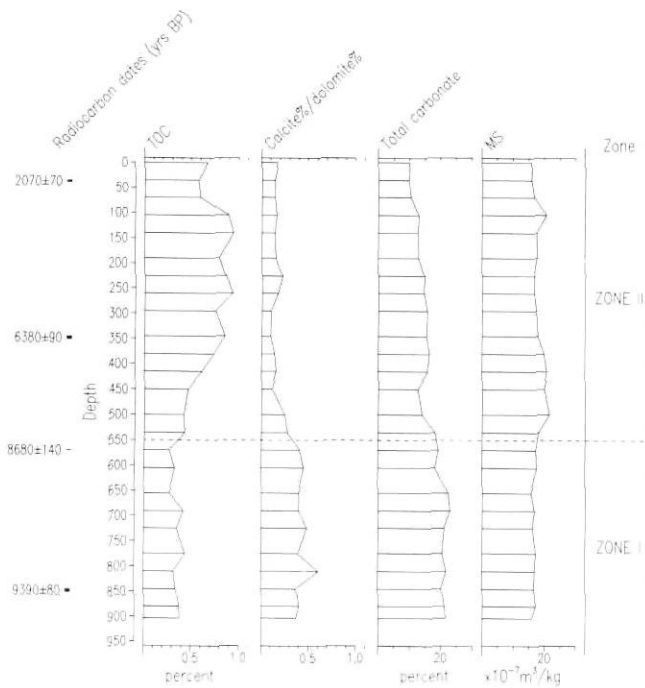


FIGURE 3a. Selected sedimentological parameters, HU76-025-35. MS = mass magnetic susceptibility; TOC% = percent total organic carbon.

Paramètres sédimentologiques choisis, Fish Lake 2. MS = susceptibilité magnétique; TOC% = pourcentage de carbone organique total.

and 5% (Fig. 2b). In these low-organic sediments, contamination of the AIOM fraction is possible from a variety of sources (Clark *et al.*, 1989; Short *et al.*, 1989), including black shales which occur locally in till (A.S. Dyke, personal communication, 1990). TOC dates on both marine and lacustrine sediments with low organic carbon content are now widely regarded as unreliable (Fillon *et al.*, 1981) and some laboratories (e.g., GSC) will no longer date these materials. We believe that the Fish Lake dates are maximum ages and are thus suspicious.

The organic-rich sections have <sup>14</sup>C dates ranging from modern to 16,849 ± 860 BP (GX-9303) (Table I). Finite dates older than 10,000 BP were reported by Short and Andrews (1988) for the original section and also for Saddle Section II in this study. To test these results, we submitted macrofossils for AMS dating from the level dated 15,810 ± 490 BP (GX-10628) (Short and Andrews, 1988, Table II). The AMS result of 7790 ± 65 BP (AA-3974) and other new dates (AA-6453 and GX-13795) (Table I) cast serious doubts on the validity of the > 10,000 BP dates.

The four marine carbonate dates have been adjusted for an ocean reservoir age of 450 years. Although a larger reservoir correction is possible, we use 450 years as a default value in line with earlier compilations from southern Baffin Island (see Kaufman and Williams, 1992). The shell date (GSC-5223) has a built-in correction of 410 years. Few calcareous foraminifera were recovered from the core top; therefore we used moss fragments to date this sediment. Because

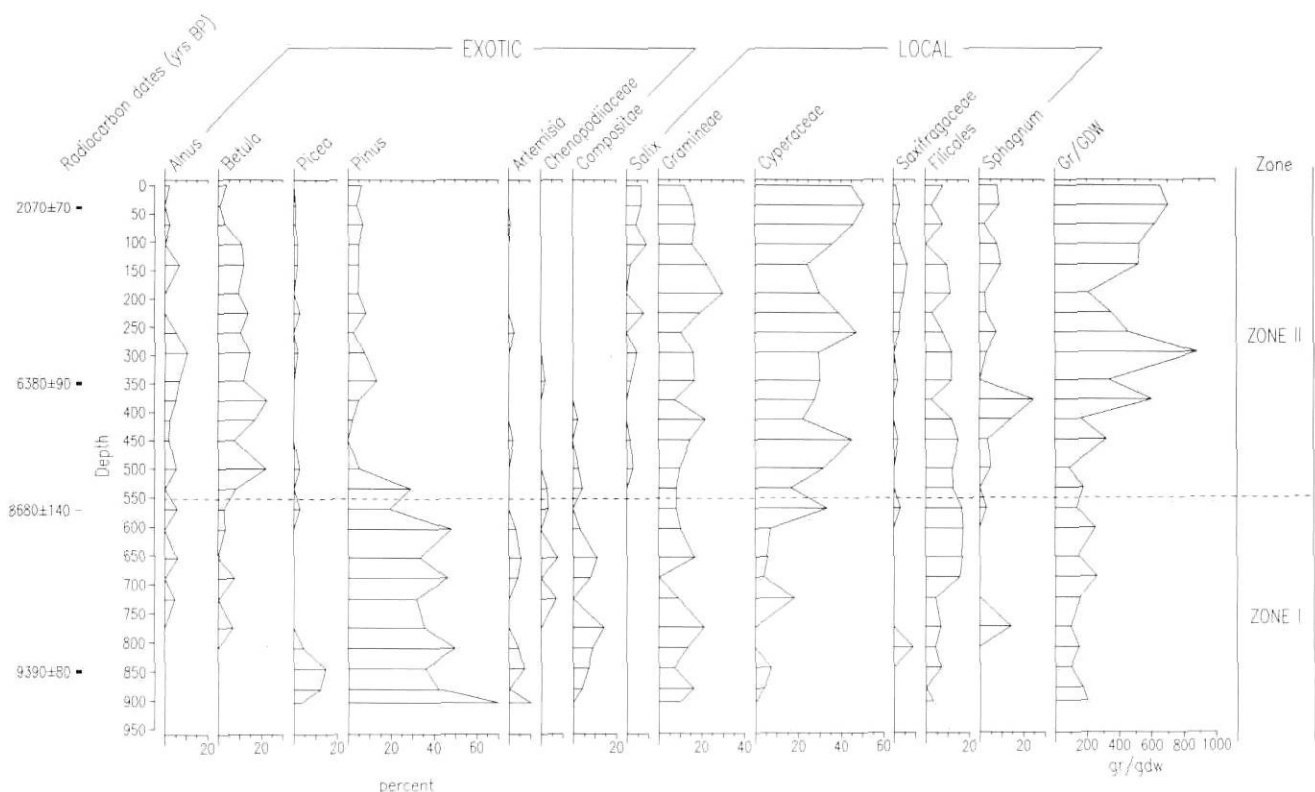


FIGURE 3b. Percentage pollen diagram (reduced data set) and pollen concentration summary (g/gdw), HU76-025-35.

Diagramme pollinique en pourcentage (ensemble de données réduit) et concentration pollinique totale (grains/g de séd. sec), HU76-025-35.

TABLE I  
Radiocarbon dates and sample data, Arctic Bay, Baffin Island

Site	Depth (cm)	Field no.	Sed lab no.	Material dated	Dated sample wt. (g)	% Organic carbon	pH	Radiocarbon age (yr BP)	"Corrected" date	Lab no.**
Strathcona Sd.	35-39		CHEM#327	Moss fragments	NA	NA	NA	2070 ± 70	1620 ± 70	AA-7012
	345-351		GRL-921-S	Foraminifera	0.03	NA	NA	6380 ± 90	5930 ± 90	AA-5290
	570		GRL-858-S	Shells	0.134	0.85	8.1	8630 ± 140	8180 ± 140	AA-2641
	845-851		GRL-922-S	Foraminifera, benthics	0.01	0.27	8.5	9380 ± 80	NA	AA-5987
Victor Bay				<i>Hiattella arctica</i>	8.4	NA	NA	8600 ± 160	8630 ± 160	GSC-5223
Fish Lake 2	6-7	FL2-4	GRL-801-0	Moss in clay	0.09	5	7.3	375 ± 65	NA	AA-3997
	22-27	FL2-2	GRL-786-0	Clayey mud	0.43	NA	6.9	6155 ± 155	NA	AA-3286
	35-38	FL2-3	GRL-802-0	Clayey mud	0.09	1.92	7.1	17,020 ± 170*	NA	AA-3995
	45-50	FL2-1	GRL-773-0	Clay	0.31	2.99	7.1	13,720 ± 95*	NA	AA-3256
Saddle Section I	26-30	I-1	—	Sandy sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	8770 ± 260	NA	GX-13794
	60-63	I-2	—	Sandy sedge-sphagnum peat	NA	NA	NA	7685 ± 260	NA	GX-13795
Saddle Section II	23-27	II-1	—	Clay	NA	NA	NA	9715 ± 380*	NA	GX-13796
	190	II-2	—	Sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	10,595 ± 380*	NA	GX-13797
	435-440	II-3	—	Sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	12,720 ± 670*	NA	GX-13798
	420	II-4	GRL-904-0	Twig	NA	NA	NA	7800 ± 70	NA	AA-6453
George V Section	85-90	GV-1	—	Sandy sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	6770 ± 205	NA	GX-13799
	163-166	GV-2	—	Sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	8460 ± 245	NA	GX-13800
	Slump "B"	GV-3	—	Sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	7730 ± 180	NA	GX-13801
1982 Organic Section	0-4	AB-5	GRL-615-0		4.06	10.5	3.3	Modern	NA	GX-9685
	23-26	AB-4	GRL-616-0		0.8	20.4	4.3	5075 ± 210	NA	GX-9686
	50-57.5	AB-8	GRL-717-0	Sedge peat	3.16	NA	NA	6720 ± 390	NA	GX-12852
	82.5-87.5	AB-1	GRL-587-0		2.52	8.4	NA	8635 ± 565	NA	GX-9302
	137.5-142.5	AB-7	—	Sedge peat	NA	NA	NA	7830 ± 180	NA	GX-10829
	182.5-187.5	AB-2	GRL-588-0		0.63	2.5	NA	16,849 ± 860*	NA	GX-9303
	255-260	AB-6	GRL-670-0	Sedge peat	0.76	3.75	5.9	15,810 ± 490*	NA	GX-10628
255-260	AB-9	GRL-800-0	Plant fragments	NA	NA	NA	7790 ± 65	NA	AA-3974	
280-290	AB-3	GRL-589-0		0.54	4.3	NA	14,185 ± 760*	NA	GX-9304	

\* = Dates judged questionable on low terrestrial acid-insoluble organic matter.

\*\* = AA dates are AMS dates; GX dates are standard dates.

NA = not applicable.

the upper sediment of the piston cores is often lost during collection, we assume an age for the top of the piston core of  $500 \pm$  years.

Our assessment of the  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates we have obtained is that we place most reliance on AMS dates on plant macrofossils or on marine carbonates. Both conventional and AMS dates on organic-poor sediments appear to be contaminated by old carbon, probably from erosion of the surrounding shales.

#### LAKE SEDIMENTS

##### Sedimentology

Fish Lake cores 2 and 4 were X-radiographed and their volume magnetic mass susceptibility determined. The cores had zones of laminae. Figure 2a shows the downcore variations in some selected variables (TOC, total carbonate, sand,

and MS) for Fish Lake 2. The sediments range from sandy silt to clayey silt. They are moderately compact; dry volume densities commonly range from 600 and 800 kg/m<sup>3</sup>. The total carbonate (largely dolomite), sand percentage, and magnetic mass susceptibility show pronounced peaks between ca. 30 and 45 cm.

##### Pollen

Two pollen zones are defined:

*Zone 1 (50-30 cm).* Low pollen concentrations are characteristic of this zone, commonly  $\leq 2000$  g/gdw (Fig. 2b), and the most abundant taxa are Cyperaceae, Gramineae, and Filicales. The percentage pollen spectrum (Fig. 2b) is also dominated by Gramineae (generally  $\geq 20\%$ ), Filicales (generally  $\geq 20\%$ ), and Cyperaceae (19-60%). *Salix* is only sporadically represented, *Alnus* is recorded at only one level, and no

*Picea* pollen grains are recorded. *Betula* and *Pinus* occur consistently in the lower half of the zone.

**Zone II (30-0 cm).** Pollen concentrations (Fig. 2b) commonly range between 2000 and 4000 g/gdw, with a prominent peak of 16,790 g/gdw at 6-cm dominated by *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (purple saxifrage; 14,626 g/gdw).

Cyperaceae (ca. 60%), Gramineae (10-20%), and Filicales ( $\leq 8\%$ ) continue to dominate the percentage pollen assemblage (Fig. 2b), but the latter two have decreased in abundance. *Salix*, *Pinus*, and various herb pollen taxa are recorded throughout the zone. *Alnus*, *Betula*, and *Picea* occur sporadically. The large value of *Saxifraga oppositifolia* at the 6-cm level (675%, excluded from the pollen sum at this level only) highlights the potential problem of overrepresentation of one or two taxa in a low-productivity environment.

**Diatoms**

Except for rare fragments of *Fragilaria* spp., the Fish Lake 2 core is barren of diatoms. We suspect that the lake water has a high pH ( $> 8$ ) because of the high carbonate content of the sediment (Fig. 2a), which would cause the diatom frustules to dissolve.

**MARINE SEDIMENTS**

**Sedimentology**

The sediment in HU76-025-35 is reddish to dark grey colour and coarsens upward from the base. Ice rafted pebbles occur throughout. Gravel-size carbonate particles occur below 540 cm. The fine-grained sediments suggest that deposition resulted from settling of suspended sediment contained in glacial or nival meltwaters (Gilbert, 1982; Hein and Longstaffe, 1985; Andrews, 1990). Rare thin-bedded sands indicate possible deposition from turbidity currents (Hein and Longstaffe, 1985).

There are two distinct sedimentary units that reflect both a change in sedimentation rate and a shift in provenance, with

TABLE II  
Fossil insect and arthropod remains, Saddle I, Arctic Bay

Depth (cm)	0-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-51	51-57	60-63
Oribatid Mites	49					3	13	9	9	8	1	5
Spiders					2		6	4	1			
Fly Pupa							1	1				
Caddisflies									1			
Parasitic Hymenoptera												1
Aleocharinae												1
<i>Hydroporus</i> sp.							1					
<i>Pterostichus</i> ( <i>Cryobius</i> ) sp.									1			1
<i>Amara alpina</i> Zett.									1	1		
Carabidae undet.								1				
Total	49	0	0	0	0	5	13	18	16	11	2	7

the boundary at about the 550 cm level (Fig. 3a). The TOC in the lower unit ranges from 0.2% to 0.4%, whereas in the upper unit it ranges from 0.55% to 1.0%. Conversely, the carbonate content and the ratio of calcite to dolomite decrease from the base to the top, with a hint of a step change at the boundary.

**Pollen**

Two pollen zones are defined:

**Zone I (500-903 cm).** Pollen concentrations are low ( $< 250$  g/gdw) in Zone I (Fig. 3b) and dominated by *Pinus*. Exotic taxa, especially *Pinus* (19-70%), *Picea* (4-14%), *Betula* (3-14%), *Artemisia* (sage; 0-6%), Compositae (sunflower family; 0-14%), and Chenopodiaceae (goosefoot family; 0-8%), dominate the percentage pollen assemblage (Fig. 3b). *Alnus* is present sporadically. Filicales rises in the upper part of Zone I and peak values (11-18%) persist into Zone II.

**Zone II (0-500 cm).** Zone II is distinguished by larger pollen concentrations, generally  $> 400$  g/gdw (Fig. 3b). The pollen concentration spectrum is dominated by Cyperaceae and Gramineae, with maximum numbers of *Alnus* and *Betula*. The percentage pollen spectrum (Fig. 3b) is also dominated by Cyperaceae (22-51%), Gramineae (10-30%), *Betula* (1-23%), and *Alnus* (0-10%). Other exotic taxa (e.g., *Pinus*, *Artemisia*, Compositae, and Chenopodiaceae) decline rapidly at the zone boundary. *Betula* percentages decrease in the upper 70 cm. Several local taxa, e.g. *Salix* and *Sphagnum*, are consistently present in the upper two-thirds of the zone.

**Diatoms**

Diatoms are present from ca. 400 cm to the top of the core (Fig. 4a). They peak in abundance at 105 cm, followed by a

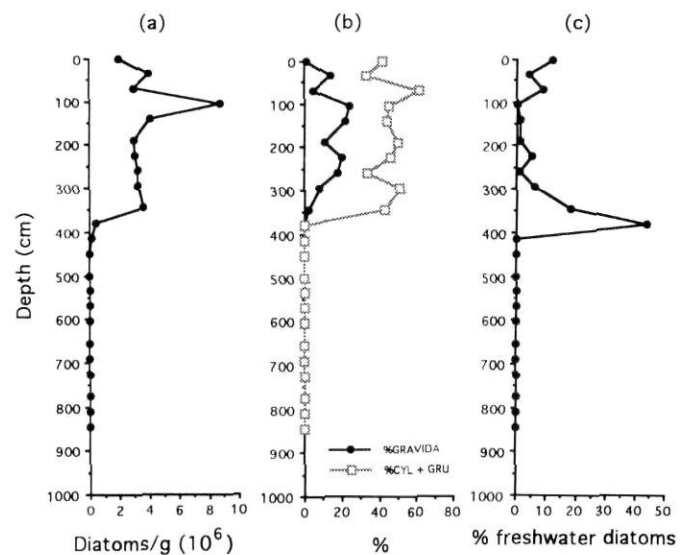


FIGURE 4. Selected diatom variables, HU76-025-35: a) total number of diatoms per gram versus depth; b) % *T. gravida* and % *N. cylindra* + % *N. grunowii*; c) % freshwater diatoms.

*Variables diatomiques choisies, HU76-025-35: a) nombre total de diatomées par gramme sur la profondeur; b) % de T. gravida et % de N. cylindra + % de N. grunowii; c) % de diatomées d'eau douce.*

low at 70 cm. Freshwater diatoms appear in the core at the beginning of the diatom record (Fig. 4c), marking an influx of fresh water from the land. Subsequently, the record shows a reduced input of freshwater diatoms, relative to marine taxa, between 350 cm and 100 cm. A renewed influx of freshwater diatoms occurs above 70 cm. Increased terrestrial input into the fiord at that time is supported by abundant fragments of mosses and liverworts (M. Walker, personal communication, 1991) in the sediment.

*Nitzschia grunowii* and *N. cylindra*, sea-ice indicators (Sancetta, 1982; Williams, 1986), as well as *Thalassiosira grandidieri*, a species tolerant of generally cold, relatively low salinity conditions (e.g., meltwater influence), are well represented in the core (Fig. 4b). *N. grunowii* and *N. cylindra* peak around 70 cm, a time of decreased diatom productivity, suggesting a greater severity of pack ice.

#### Foraminifera

The Strathcona Sound core has low numbers (1-50/g) and few species of foraminifera. A screen size of 63  $\mu\text{m}$  was used in this study. Planktonic forms, represented only by *Neogloboquadrina pachyderma*, are rare throughout (< 4% of total calcareous foraminifera). *Cassidulina reniforme* (Fig. 5), a component of the "ice distal facies" (Osterman, 1982), is most abundant below 500 cm, and makes up over 80% of the calcareous fauna below 700 cm. *Islandiella norcrossi* (Fig. 5), a component of the "extreme ice distal facies" (Osterman, 1982), is most abundant in the top 500 cm, constituting more than 50% of the calcareous forms above 350 cm. *Elphidium excavatum clavata* (Fig. 5), an "ice proximal-extreme ice proximal species" (Osterman, 1982), is present below about 200 cm, but never comprises more than 10% of the fauna. *Fursenkoina fusiformis*, a species associated with ice distal glacial marine and ice margin sediments (Scott *et al.*, 1984; Vilks *et al.*, 1989; Evans, 1990), is uncommon but increases in abundance downcore to a maximum of 12% at the base (Fig. 5). *Buccella frigida* is present above 400 cm; this species is characteristic of water temperatures and salinities in the ranges of 0-2°C and 33-34 ‰ (Vilks and Deonarire, 1988). Thus, the foraminifera indicate that the ice margin retreated from this area during the time the sediments in the core were being deposited.

The top of the core has a distinctive agglutinated fauna (Fig. 5), dominated by *Adercotryma glomerata* and *Spiroplectammina bififormis*. The modern distribution of live agglutinated and calcareous species appears to be controlled by differences in water masses, e.g. temperature, salinity, ice cover, availability of calcium carbonate (Vilks, 1969; Greiner, 1974; MacLean *et al.*, 1989; Hunt and Corliss, 1993). Agglutinated faunas record a broad regional signal and the establishment of modern oceanographic conditions — i.e., cold, less saline Arctic waters — after 6000 BP in many sites. On the northern and central Baffin Shelf, the replacement of calcareous foraminifera by arenaceous foraminifera after 6000 BP is believed to correspond to the re-establishment of the CO<sub>2</sub>-rich Baffin Current (Osterman and Nelson, 1989). These faunas are also associated with modern currents on the Labrador-Newfoundland-Nova Scotia shelf (Miller *et al.*, 1982; Scott *et al.*, 1984; Vilks *et al.*, 1984; Williamson, 1985).

*Cibicides lobatulus*, a calcareous encrusting species, constitutes 10-17% of the calcareous foraminifera in the upper 35 cm of the core (Fig. 5); it is also associated with modern currents.

#### ORGANIC SECTIONS

##### Fossil insects

George V Section is barren of insect remains and Saddle Section I contains infrequent insect and arthropod fossils (Table II). The record is dominated by oribatid mites and spiders; beetle remains are rare. Only modern water beetles (Dytiscidae) were successfully collected during the 1987 field season. We believe the Arctic Bay region is at the northern limit of beetles' and many other insects' ranges, probably because of the aridity of the area.

## DISCUSSION

#### CHRONOLOGY

We now have 27 radiocarbon dates on terrestrial and marine sediments from Arctic Bay and Strathcona Sound. We believe that none of the dates older than 9000 BP, the probable date on deglaciation of the area, are reliable. They must be treated with caution until we can explain the differences

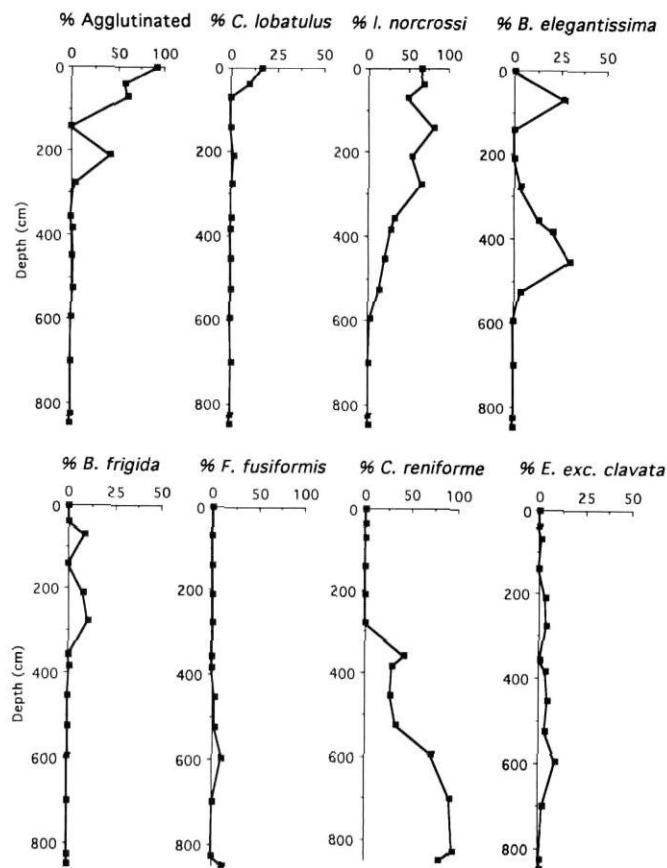


FIGURE 5. Percentage foraminifera diagram, HU76-025-35. Diagramme des foraminifères en pourcentage, HU76-025-35.





of these grains from southerly or westerly sources onto the impoverished local vegetation. Pollen can enter a fiord system in several ways, including fluvial, eolian, and marine transport (Short *et al.*, 1989). Hence, the interpretation of the exotic pollen spectrum in the lower part of core HU76-025-35 (*i.e.*, between ca. 8600 and 9400 BP) is more indeterminate.

Increased exotic pollen influx into the region after ca. 7000 BP reflects the establishment of more continuous vegetation cover to the south and west. In the terrestrial record, alder and spruce appear consistently for the first time. Both Fish Lake 2 and HU76-025-35 register peak birch influx in the middle Holocene. Decreasing birch influx in the latest Holocene (Fig. 6) records increasingly impoverished conditions in southern Baffin Island (Mode, 1980; Short *et al.*, 1985).

MARINE DEPOSITIONAL HISTORY

On Figure 7 we compare the  $\ln(1/\text{TOC}\%)$ , which reflects relative changes in the rates of clastic sedimentation, and diatom accumulation rates ( $\text{g}/\text{cm}^2/\text{yr}(10^6)$ ) for the Strathcona Sound core. Andrews (1987) and Syvitski *et al.* (1990) showed that the amount of total organic carbon in sediments in Baffin Island fiords is inversely related to the rate of sedimentation. The two records are partial mirror images, and allow us to divide the core into four zones.

Zone A (9000-6300 BP) is barren of diatoms and sedimentation rates are high. There is an increase in the sedimentation rate immediately prior to  $8180 \pm 140$  BP (AA-2641, corrected) which may coincide with local Cockburn glacial re-advances on northern Baffin Island (Falconer *et al.*, 1965). The lack of diatoms indicates severe ice conditions in the fiord. Pollen, mainly exotic, settled on the sea-ice surface, and during the summer the sea ice probably broke up sufficiently for pollen and other wind- and fluvially-deposited particles to drop into the sea. The foraminifera indicate ice proximal conditions at the beginning of the record, but the change to a transitional assemblage by 8000 BP suggests retreat of land-based ice masses.

The lower boundary of Zone B (6300-3500 BP) marks the sudden increase in diatom accumulation rates and a change to lower sedimentation rates. The peak percentage of freshwater diatoms at 6300 BP suggests an abrupt influx of water from terrestrial sources at that time. This suggests a warming of the land areas around Strathcona Sound, allowing the lakes and ponds to develop diatom blooms. These diatoms were then flushed into the sea during spring melt, either as part of the sediment thanatocoenoses or as living cells. Marine diatoms appear suddenly in the Strathcona Sound record around 6000 BP. There may be several reasons for these sudden changes. In response to increasing regional warming, the sea could have developed an ice-free area around the perimeter of the Sound during the summer months where marine diatoms flourished. Alternatively, sea ice concentration may have lessened during the summer, allowing increased diatom bloom. The large percentages of the sea-ice indicators, *N. grunowii* and *N. cylindra* (Fig. 4b), around 6000 BP suggests that sea ice concentrations/densities were high (*e.g.*, Williams, 1990). The foraminifera

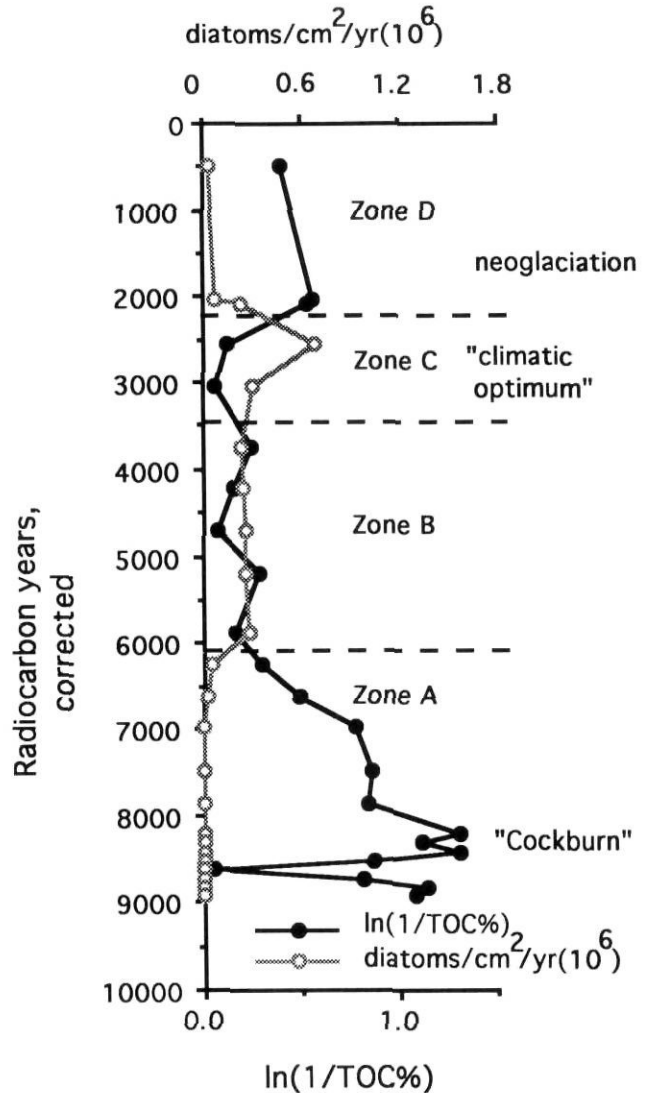


FIGURE 7. Diatom accumulation rates,  $\ln(1/\text{TOC}\%)$ , and some paleoenvironmental events, HU76-025-35.

*Les taux d'accumulation des diatomées selon les événements paléoenvironnementaux, HU76-025-35.*

are dominated by ice distal species during this period. Thus, from 6000 BP to ca. 3500 BP the oceanographic conditions in Strathcona Sound did not vary a great deal.

Zone C (3500-2100 BP) registers an increase in diatom accumulation rates. At the same time, sea-ice indicators also decrease (Fig. 4b). These patterns suggest a warming of surface water and a concomitant lessening of sea-ice concentration. Sedimentation rates reach their lowest values at this time. The rise in agglutinated foraminifera ca. 4000 BP marks the establishment of modern oceanographic conditions, *i.e.*, the fauna are no longer responding to a glacial/terrestrial signal but to a regional oceanographic/marine signal.

A cooling of the sea surface is suggested by lower diatom accumulation rates and an increase in sea-ice indicators (Fig. 4b) in Zone D (2100-500 BP). Sedimentation rates rise toward the top of the core, possibly associated with the

growth of local glaciers and ice fields during the neoglacial interval (Andrews, 1982; Davis, 1985).

### CONCLUSIONS

1. There are inconsistencies in the radiocarbon dates > 10,000 BP, but 9000 BP is a reasonable estimate on the timing of deglaciation in the Arctic Bay region. Conventional radiocarbon dates on organic sediments give ages that are too old in comparison to AMS dates. However, AMS dates also yield spuriously old results for lake sediments with low organic contents. Presently, the most reliable ages are conventional and AMS dates on marine shells, foraminifera, and plant macrofossils.

2. During the early Holocene, the local terrestrial vegetation, dominated by grasses and sedges, was sparse, allowing an influx of exotic tree and shrub pollen from south and west of the ice sheet to dominate the local pollen rain. Ice proximal and deglacial conditions existed in Strathcona Sound, but sea-ice densities inhibited diatom growth until ca. 6300 BP.

3. The local pollen record registers a middle Holocene warming after ca. 7000 BP and intensifying after shortly thereafter, while the exotic pollen record reflects the development of forest to the south and west during the same interval. A peak in diatom productivity between 3500 and 2500 BP is thought to record warmer surface waters and less summer sea ice, while the establishment of agglutinated foraminifera, *B. frigida*, and peak *I. norcrossi* percentages indicate the establishment of modern bottom water conditions in the fiords. There is a similar offset between the pollen "climatic optimum" and the diatom "climatic optimum" along the eastern Baffin Island coast (see Williams, 1990) as the terrestrial and marine environments are reacting to different forcing factors.

4. A decline in diatom productivity and increased sedimentation in the marine cores after 2000 BP is correlated with a climatic cooling evidenced by more sea ice and perhaps neoglaciation on land. Although the local vegetation record is complacent in the late Holocene, the decline in birch influx at this time can be related to cooler climate in southern Baffin Island.

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